

TWO GOVERNORS URGE IMPROVEMENT OF RIVER

Government Control Essential to Welfare of the Commonwealth, Declare Cummins and Van Sant.

Inequalities in railroad rates and the remedy was the basis of a notable address by Gov. A. B. Cummins, of Iowa, before the delegates to the Upper Mississippi River Improvement association convention at Dubuque. The Iowa executive emphatically declared that the present rates charged by the railroads of the country are a menace to the people, and that government control of rates is essential to the welfare of the commonwealth. As a remedy he advocated a department of the government that would have authority to regulate rates. Gov. Cummins spoke as follows:

"It may be assumed, without putting the thought in formal phrase, that I am deeply interested in the welfare of the state of Iowa. It may also be taken for granted that whatever I can do or say that will stimulate the growth or increase the prosperity of our business affairs will be gladly done and enthusiastically said. I am only less interested in those things which touch the welfare of our water states, and indeed I recognize that it is impossible (and I am glad it is so) to dissociate the concerns of our own commonwealth from the concerns of the commonwealths around us.

One of the gravest of problems. "I see in the general objects of the association a movement toward the solution of one of the gravest problems that the people of this country have undertaken to solve, and which they must solve if justice is to prevail. "Considered independently of all other means of transportation, the improvement of the Mississippi river will confer a vast benefit upon the people who live in the Mississippi valley. It needs no argument to demonstrate that a navigable stream, extending from St. Paul to the Gulf of Mexico, capable of carrying at all seasons, save when nature closes it, the commerce that may be made tributary to it, is of incalculable advantage to the men who do business in this magnificent empire, whether they use the highway as an instrument of national or international traffic. Agriculturally, the land through which the upper Mississippi river flows is and always will be master of the world. There are other fertile regions, great in extent and prolific in their productions, but there are none which produce so many things necessary to modern civilized life, and so abundantly and persistently as does that territory watered and drained by the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

"The years of the future will but emphasize the prominence which this territory holds in the products of the soil. It is therefore manifest that whether we confine our thoughts to the distribution of these products among

our own people, or enlarge it to their distribution among other countries, this waterway which traverses the whole hxx also eff empire of agricultural wealth should be utilized.

Valley of Industry. "We, however, paint but half the picture when we describe the immensity of the traffic which arises from agriculture. The overruling factor in the fields of manufacture—economy of production—is fast making of this same rich valley a home of industrial enterprises the like of which will be seen nowhere else in all the country.

"The upper Mississippi river ought to be crowded from shore to shore, not with ships of war, but with ships of peace, not heavy with armor and ordnance, but loaded to the guards with the products of labor intended for the use and to promote the happiness of mankind. It matters not from what point of view the subject is examined, it is clear that the waters of the river are needed in a great commerce which, magnificent as it now appears, is but the promise of its immensity in the years to come. With these conclusions, there can be no dispute, and they imperatively demand the improvement of the river, the deepening of its channels, the removal of obstructions, on the part of the general government, unless the expenditure would be greater than the value of the results secured.

Entitled to Its Portion. "I shall not venture even a conjecture upon the cost of improving the river so that it will be the useful waterway that it should be, nor do I intend to criticize the action of congress in the appropriations for the betterment of rivers and harbors in the past. Assuming that it is a proper function of the government to aid commerce in this manner, assuming that such facilities as have been created at Sault Ste Marie, such dredging as has been done at the mouth of the Mississippi, such inlets as have been deepened on lake and ocean shores, such harbors as have been created on every side of the republic, are fairly within the duties of the government, in helping the people to overcome the obstacles of nature, there is no man who can deny that the Mississippi river can justly demand a portion of the bounty which the government is so generously bestowing in other localities. If we measure the importance of a free and unobstructed waterway from St. Paul to St. Louis or to the gulf with some of the improvements which have been made, we are amazed at the blindness of those who have framed these laws for the aid of commerce.

The Louisiana Purchase. "We are celebrating this year, in a fashion never before equaled, a great national event, an event which has had a greater influence upon our destinies than any save two which are recorded in the history of the republic. I mean, of course, the acquisition of the Louisiana territory, which in its importance is subordinate only, as I look at affairs, to the adoption of the constitution of the United States and the victory of the civil war. While thus commemorating this mighty stride toward national greatness, we ought not to forget that the chief reason which led our forefathers into the negotiation with France and which fortified their hearts against the criticisms of shortsighted men, and induced them to brave the hazards of the experiment which they undertook, was the hope of a waterway, broad, deep, untrammelled, unobstructed, upon which the commerce of the country might be borne in peace and safety, from the snows of the north to the sunshine of the south.

River the Most Important. "I have thus far spoken of the Mississippi river as a means of transportation, uninfluenced and unaffected by any of the difficulties which now attend railway transportation throughout the country. If railway rates were adjusted with unerring wisdom and absolute justice, the river would still be most important as an additional medium of traffic. But in view of certain phases of railway transportation, perfectly well known to men of affairs, the improvement and use of the river becomes greatly more important than it would otherwise be. Will you permit me to call to your minds very briefly, and therefore very imperfectly, the railway situation. We have here in this country a railway development without parallel in the world. We have more than 200,000 miles of main track over which the traffic of the country is carried on. Iowa alone has in round numbers 10,000 miles of main track rails. This system as a whole is a monument to the genius and energy of the American people of which every loyal citizen ought to be proud. Those who own this system are entitled to a fair return, not only for the capital which they have invested in it, but for the risks which they had to bear in creating it, and we ought to stand firmly against any movement which has for its object the reduction of rates below the point of fair remuneration.

Unjust Railroad Rates. "I do not intend to speak at this time in detail of the aggregate revenues received either by any one railway, or by all the railways. It is quite probable, however, that upon investigation it would be found that the revenue, as a whole, exceeds the fair remuneration of which I have spoken. The purpose of this prelude is to connect it with the statement, the truth of which may easily be established, that in the adjustment of rates as between communities and localities, and in many instances in their enforcement, as between individuals, there is more injustice now being inflicted upon the American people than they are suffering from any other causes combined. Every man in the United States engaged in business of any magnitude is wholly dependent upon transportation for the permanence and profits of his business. If railway rates were equitably adjusted, but as a whole too high, the people would be divided into two classes, namely, the owners and users of railways, and while the former might reap inordinate profits, the latter would contribute proportionately to the wrongful exaction. But if railway rates are not fairly adjusted, then no matter whether they are too high or just high enough, the men and communities who are discriminated against have no chance in the struggles of commerce. The present adjustment of these rates is full of the most vicious inequalities. I could stand here by the hour and recite instances which have either developed by lawful authorities, or that have come under my personal observation, but inasmuch as I am speaking to men who are quite as familiar with the subject as I am, I do not enter into these details. I assert the fact, and hold myself in readiness to have it questioned.

Inequalities in Rates. "These inequalities are not simply the result of mistakes, nor simply the result of a failure to grasp the whole situation by the rate making power, but are the results, first, of that selfishness and desire for one's own profit that is common to all humanity, and second, to the intimacies of railway management, as allied to industrial combinations, which have forced railway managers into the vicious practices now known to all men. For myself, I never expect to see competition an effective and continuing force in railway rate making. However we may deplore the elimination of this factor in the business of transportation, we will be compelled to accept the situation, and act accordingly. When, however, competition ceases to act, and fails to secure fairness, there is but one force that can act, and that is the force of the government under which we live. I believe that in view of the development of which we have been witnesses, in view of the dependence of the whole people upon equality of transportation, it is one of the highest and most important duties of government to see to it that those who must use the means of transportation may use these facilities upon fair and equitable terms.

Government Control of Rates. "In this state we perceived this necessity fifteen years ago, and clothed our railway commissioners with authority to revise railway rates. The jurisdiction of our commission, however, extends only to local business. The proportion of this business as compared with that which is carried on between the states is very small. What we now need more than any other thing is that some tribunal of the general government, having authority throughout the length and breadth of the land, shall be invested with the power to supervise and revise and recreate rates established by the railways for the interstate commerce. The time has passed in which the expediency of exercising their power can be successfully controverted. The railways have a right to full compensation for the service they render, but they have no right to assume or assert that rates made for them by the government will be less than compensatory. They must, as we all must, depend upon the justice of the laws and the integrity with which they are enforced.

Must Be a Change. "I recognize the difficulty of the undertaking, but in these days governments must undertake difficult things, and if they cannot successfully perform them, then government is a failure, and we must try some other plan for the protection of society. I do not doubt that now and then injustice would be done by the tribunal to which this power is granted to railway owners, but injustice is now and then done to all men. I believe, however, that less injustice would be done than is now inflicted by the railways guided only by their own desires.

"I trust, therefore, that this association will bear in mind that it is working upon a great problem. I shall not expect when you succeed, as I hope and trust you may, succeed, in opening up this waterway to the commerce of the country, the competition which will remove the unfairness and inequality of which I have spoken, but I do expect to see the problem made easier of solution when, upon the broad bosom of the Mississippi there shall float the crafts of commerce owned and controlled by any person who has the courage and the capital to build a boat. Every independent element in transportation will be efficient in the work which the government must do, and I pledge you my sincere and enthusiastic co-operation to promote the cause to which you have dedicated this association."

Gov. Van Sant Talks. Gov. S. R. Van Sant, of Minnesota, followed Gov. Cummins, and he began his remarks by declaring that he agreed with every statement made by the Iowa executive. Gov. Van Sant then took up the work before the convention. He said in part: "We have a great work before us



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and we must work hard to accomplish the result we desire. We have a right to ask that the river be improved and you should remember that if you want a thing you must first ask for it and then if you don't get it you must fight for it. The object of this convention is to impress on our congressmen that we must have the river improved. Of course there will be some croakers who will say we will never get what we are after. There are always croakers but they shouldn't alarm us. There were croakers who said the isthmian canal would never be built, but it will. I have built and one of the results will be that it will mean the improvement of the Mississippi. But I am not satisfied to wait until that time. Let the river be improved while the canal is being dug and when both are completed we will be ready for business. Work is necessary to secure what we want but we have a representative government and public sentiment rules in this country.

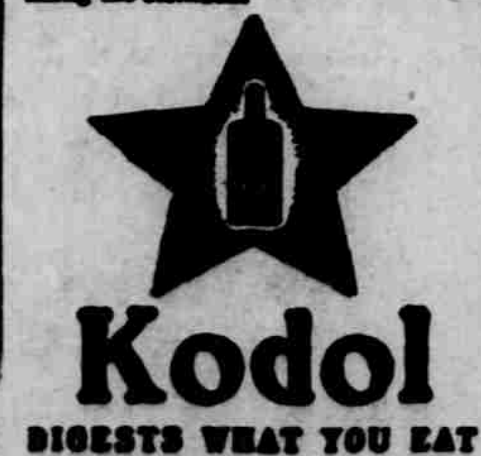
World's Greatest Artery. "I can see now the Mississippi river of the future as the greatest artery of commerce the world has ever known. Let us work and impress on congress that we are in dead earnest. I believe what Gov. Cummins has said about transportation. A change is necessary for the benefit of the entire country, for monopoly is getting so big that people must soon rise in their might. I would be in favor of giving the interstate commerce commission power to regulate rates. I have a great affection for this old river. I was born on its banks. I bathed in it when a boy. I traversed it when a man, and whatever I have today I accumulated from work on the river. Whether in office or as a private citizen I promise you to do whatever lies in my power to assist in bringing about the end this association desires."

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